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ARTICLES:

(1) US criticism of Japan over comfort women issue is a rehash of case already settled with punishments

SANKEI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
March 10, 2007

Yoshihisa Komori, Washington

Some members of the United States Congress and the New York Times, in criticizing the wartime comfort women issue, cite a case of Dutch women as the worst example of the former Imperial Japanese Army's coercion of sex slavery. However, it has been revealed that, immediately after learning that lower-rank soldiers had rounded up women against the military brass' decision, the upper ranks had ordered those soldiers to suspend the illegal acts. It has also been found that heavy penalties, including the death penalty, were inflicted on responsible soldiers in a court martial. The recent criticism of Japan in the US is a rehash of the case that has already been settled with punishments.

The New York Time dated March 8 reported as if Prime Minister Shinzo Abe totally denied the government's coercion of wartime sex-slavery. In this article, the focus was on the testimony of a Dutch woman, 84, in which she said, "When I was under detention in Indonesia, I was forcibly taken by an officer into a brothel for soldiers and was treated as a sex slave." The newspaper quoted her testimony in public hearing at the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs on Feb.

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According to sources close to Japan-US relations, however, an officer and 10 civilian soldiers were found guilty in March 1948, and heavy penalties were imposed on them, based on testimonies by former comfort women in a court martial in Indonesia. Although the former Dutch comfort woman demanded Japan take responsibility in the public hearing, those involved in her case had already been punished nearly 60 years ago.

(2) House Committee on Foreign Affairs to take vote on "comfort women resolution" this month

SANKEI (Page 1) (Full)
March 10, 2007

Hidenari Yamamoto, Washington

Defining the comfort women issue as "a forcible prostitution system introduced by the government for the Imperial Armed Force," a resolution under debate at the United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs urges Japan to formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility; and educate current and future generations about this crime.

Representative Mike Honda, who proposed adopting the comfort women resolution, cited in his letter to the president of the House that the Japanese government in its statements has not indicated a stance of placing emphasis on the issue. In reaction, Ambassador to the US Ryozi Kato made these counterarguments: (1) The Japanese government has already acknowledged and accepted historical responsibility for the comfort women issue and offered an apology; (2) The government has disbursed 40 million dollars for the Asian Women's Fund designed to provide former comfort women with compensation; and (3) many publications, including school textbooks, refer to the comfort women issue.

In its recent article critical of Japan over the comfort women issue, a US liberal newspaper focused on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's statement denying the presence of any evidence to back the government's coercion of wartime sex slavery in a narrow sense. Liberal newspapers tend to see the prime minister as a nationalist.

The prime minister's series of remarks denying the government's coercion and refusing to offer an apology irritated their fixed view.

Many observers anticipate that the House of Representatives would take a vote on the resolution in a meeting of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs by the end of this month and adopt it in a plenary session, while keeping in mind Prime Minister Abe's planned US visit in April. Some persons indicated that the resolution is likely to be adopted due in the aftermath of the prime minister's remarks.

(3) Comments by US Ambassador to Japan Schieffer

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
March 10, 2007

The following are main points of US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer.

7 The comfort women issue is a very difficult issue for both Japan and the United States. Even though some groups in Japan may belittle

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it, the issue could become a serious issue in the United States. American voters, whatever groups they belong to, are nervous about sexual slavery and human trafficking involving women. If the American public takes Japan as backing away from the Kono statement, that could have a destructive impact. It is a mistake to marginalize the impact Japan's response to the comfort women issue will have on the US.

7 We are concerned that the Japan-North Korea working group made no headway in their talks in Hanoi on such issues as the abductions, but that does not surprise us. The US has endorsed Japan, and the US shares the Japanese government's position that there will be no normalization of diplomatic relations unless the abduction issue is resolved. We don't think Japan will be isolated, and Japan does not have to worry about the isolation.

7 There is a subtle difference in priority issues among the six-party member nations. For instance, China and South Korea are highly concerned that North Korea may collapse. The US is wary about a transfer of weapons of mass destruction from North Korea to terrorists. However, all the member nations have agreed on the need to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula.

(4) Minshuto launches a parliamentary council to seek review of Kono statement

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
March 10, 2007

The move for seeking a review of the statement released in 1993 by Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono or the so-called Kono statement, which offered an apology and remorse concerning the "comfort women" issue, is gaining momentum in the largest opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto). Likeminded lawmakers of the party set up a parliamentary group called "Council to Verify the Comfort Women Issue and the Truth about the Nanjing Incident" (chaired by House of Representatives member Shu Watanabe). Unlike the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) similar council calling on the government to reexamine the issue instead of calling for a review of the Kono statement, Minshuto's group intends to call on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to release a fresh statement with this wording "There was no case of using public authority to round up women."

The first meeting of the council was attended by 15 Minshuto lawmakers from both houses of the Diet. Watanabe, a conservative junior lawmaker, told the meeting: "There is no national body to produce counterevidence against a claim disgracing the country. We will endeavor to shed light on the truth as the matter remains in political ambiguity." Based on the data already released and accounts by experts, the group intends to demonstrate the conclusion that "there was no coercion of women by public authority."

Tsutomu Nishioka, professor at Tokyo Christian University who

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attended the meeting as a guest speaker, stated, "Action is needed to remove the international misunderstanding," and he suggested the need to release a new statement in the name of the chief cabinet secretary or the prime minister, as well as to review the previous

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public relations activities by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The group intends to strongly urge Prime Minister Abe, who was initially skeptical about the Kono statement, to review it. But there is a gap between the group and the party executives over the Kono statement. In fact, Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama stated:

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"Our understanding is that the Kono statement was based on facts. We on the part of the party respect (the statement)."

Proponents of the council are the following:

House of Representatives members: Takashi Ishizeki; Koichiro Ichimura; Takashi Kawamura; Keiro Kitagaki; Yasuko Komiyama, Jinpu Hideo; Katsumasa Suzuki; Masayo Tanabu; Kenji Tamura; Akihisa Nagashima; Yoshio Maki; Jin Matsubara; Mitsuo Mitani; Izumi Yoshida, Hirofumi Ryu; Eiichiro Washio; and Shu Watanabe

House of Councillors members: Yasuhiro Oe; Hirokazu Shiba; and Shinpei Matsushita

(5) Schieffer warns of move to revise Kono Statement

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
March 10, 2007

US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer, speaking to a group of Japanese reporters on Mar. 9, strongly warned of a move in Japan to revise the 1993 Kono Statement (on the "comfort women" issue. He said:

"None of our Japanese friends in the United States wants to see the Japanese government back down from the Kono Statement. It was a positive move for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to announce his position to adhere to the Kono Statement."

At the same time, indicating that past Japanese prime ministers had sent letters of apology to the surviving former comfort women, Schieffer said, "The government must not generate an impression that it would step back from the statement."

(6) US Ambassador Schieffer: Retreat from Kono Statement "will create destructive effects"

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
March 10, 2007

Asked by reporters on March 9 about a resolution before the US House of Representatives (that demands a formal apology from the Japan's prime minister for) the wartime sexual enslavement of women across Asia, US Ambassador Thomas Schieffer responded: "If Japan retreats from the Kono Statement, it will have a destructive impact." Schieffer expressed his concern about the development of Japanese lawmakers' calls for a review of the 1993 statement on the comfort-women issue by then chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono.

(7) Views divided in Kantei over calls for re-investigations on the comfort-women issue

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
March 10, 2007

The views are split also in the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) over a group of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmakers calling on the government to reinvestigate the truth about the comfort women issue. The LDP group, headed by Nariaki Nakayama, calls itself the parliamentary group to consider the future of Japan

and history education.

Nakayama said in a meeting on March 9 of the group: "When I asked

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Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shimomura about the issue, he said that (the government) would definitely investigate it." He revealed that he had checked by phone with Shimomura with whom he met the previous day.

Asked by reporters on March 9 about the conversation between Shimomura and Nakayama, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has denied the possibility of reinvestigations by the government, responded with annoyance, saying the government's intention to provide documents might not have been correctly conveyed to Nakayama. Shimomura, however, gave "no comment." Therefore, some have doubt about the government's consensus on the issue.

On the issue of the group calling for a review of the 1993 statement on the comfort women issue by then China Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono, since both Abe and Shimomura actively worked in the group as its members, they cannot turn the group's call away.

(8) Group of Minshuto lawmakers calls for review of Kono Statement

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
March 10, 2007

Conservative lawmakers in the main opposition party, Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan), formed on March 9 a group calling on the government to review the so-called Kono Statement on the comfort-women issue. The group tentatively calls itself the association to verify the truth about the comfort women issue and the Nanjing Incident. A total of 16 lawmakers, including Shu Watanabe and Jin Matsubara, attended the first meeting of the group. Watanabe, who heads the group, underscored: "If we do nothing, the comfort-women issue will become a fact in history. We will do our best to find the truth."

The Minshuto executives are becoming increasingly nervous about the group's move because they have taken a strategy of showing the public how hawkish the Abe administration is, taking up such issues as the comfort-women issue during the campaign for the July House of Councillors election.

(9) US beef: OIE to scrap age condition for beef export; Formal decision will likely come in May

ASAHI (Page 1) (Full)
Evening, March 10, 2007

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) on Mar. 9 released an outlook that the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), a Paris-based international agency in charge of defining the degree of potential BSE risk, will recognize the US as a country that can export its beef products without any limits on the age of cattle. If the OIE reaches a formal decision in May, the current age criterion that only beef from cattle aged 30 months of age or younger is eligible for exports will be eliminated, substantively easing export conditions. An even stricter condition is imposed on products bound for Japan, based on a Japan-US agreement. As such, the US intends to strongly urge Japan to ease this condition on the strength of the approval by the international agency.

The OIE is an international agency that sets safety standards for livestock. It sets minimum standards its member nations should observe based on scientific grounds. Regarding such standards for BSE, beef-exporting countries are categorized into three, based on

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the following definitions: countries whose BSE infection risks can be (1) ignored; (2) are under control; and (3) are not known, based on respective BSE infection records and BSE-preventive measures.

Countries whose BSE risks are categorized into "not known" can only export boneless beef aged up to 30 months. Countries that are recognized as "controlling BSE risks" can export products without age limits.

The USDA on Mar. 9 announced that the OIE Scientific Steering Committee agreed to categorize the US as a country where BSE risk is under control. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) released a statement the same day, noting that they expect to see an improvement in its export share on the global market.

The OIE will make a formal decision, based on views of member nations. The view is that there is little chance of the expert committee's judgment being reversed.

However, Japan sets its own import condition that Japan-bound beef must be from cattle aged 20 months or younger, the age bracket that has a less BSE risk. In order for Japan to ease this condition, the government's Food Safety Commission needs to decide to change this condition.

Pressure on Japan bound to increase

(Commentary) The US has indicated an outlook for the easing of conditions for beef exports before May, when the international standards are expected to be changed. It has thus signaled a warning that it would urge US beef importers, such as Japan, to ease their regulations. The US has urged Japan to hold talks to ease the conditions. However, Japan has not responded to the call since Japanese consumers are still concerned about the safety of US beef.

A large portion of US beef does not meet the condition set by Japan - 20 months of age or younger. The US had exported beef worth approximately 1.3 billion dollars a year to Japan before Dec. 2003, the year Japan stopped importing US beef. The estimated value of US beef exports to Japan in 2006 is approximately 50 million dollars. Many US meatpackers are criticizing Japan, saying that Japan-bound products take them extra effort and Japan's regulations are impeding smooth trade. Some even say that US meatpackers should file a complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) against the Japanese standards as being too strict.

However, in view of the fact that beef suspected of violating the age condition was found in US beef shipment in February, trust in US beef has yet to filter down to Japanese consumers.

Since the Democratic Party with a strong protectionist trend has leadership in the US Congress, the US government's pressure on Japan will likely mount in the run-up to the presidential election next year.

(10) Prime Minister Abe: Koizumi reform drive is a powerful medicine, mine is herbal one

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
March 10, 2007

Referring to differences between former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's reform drive and his own in a House of Councillors Budget

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Committee session on March 9, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stated:

"Former Prime Minister Koizumi was the most suitable person to destroy the conventional system since Japan's economy was unable to recover the lost decade. I think that Mr. Koizumi's reform program was a powerful medicine that might have included adverse effects. My reform drive will produce considerable effects like an herbal medicine that will work gradually."

Abe stressed that his reform measures have steadily made achievements, citing the passage of a set of bills revising the Basic Education Law during last year's extraordinary session of the Diet and the upgrading of the Defense Ministry to the status of ministry (in January).

(11) Defense Ministry eyes PKO training facility in collaboration with private sector

ASAHI (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
March 11, 2007

The Defense Ministry is scheduled to establish a Ground Self-Defense Force international activities training force later this month. By enhancing this plan, the ministry has decided to establish a facility tentatively called the International Peace Cooperation Center to give training to the Maritime and Air Self-Defense Forces, as well. The center is expected to become operational in several years. With the upgrade of the Defense Agency to ministry status that also raised the SDF's overseas activities to primary duties, the ministry has recognized the need for a broad range of specialized knowledge and practical training. The ministry plans to call on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in the private sector to develop human resources who can conduct peace-building and reconstruction assistance along with SDF personnel.

The training force will be established within the GSDF Central Readiness Command (CRC) tasked with responding to early-stage terrorist and guerrilla attacks and international contributions. The training force will give practical training only to GSDF troops mostly based on the GSDF's experience in UN peacekeeping operations in Cambodia. For this reason, the Defense Ministry has recognized the need to establish a facility where all SDF troops can learn of the Air Self-Defense Force's airlift mission in Iraq, the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling activities in the Indian Ocean, and other activities.

In sending SDF troops on overseas missions, the government has enacted individual time-limited legislation, such as the PKO Law and the Iraq Reconstruction Law. Envisaging a permanent overseas activities law in the future, the center is expected to conduct a study and research on a broad range of overseas activities.

A number of plans have emerged, including one to attach the envisaged center to the Joint Staff Office (JSO), the National Institute for Defense Studies, or the National Defense Academy, and another to establish a government-financed NPO. Candidate sites include spots in Tokyo and Camp Asaka in Saitama Prefecture that can give easy access for the private sector.

The ministry thinks the United States' provincial reconstruction teams (PRT) in Afghanistan and Iraq will give momentum to the plan.

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(12) Japan plans to deploy new missiles at 10 bases in 2007-2010

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Abridged)
March 12, 2007

The government yesterday revealed a plan to deploy Patriot Advanced Capability 3 (PAC-3) ground-to-air guided missiles for Japan's anti-ballistic missile defense. According to the plan, the government will deploy the first three PAC-3 units to three bases in the Kanto region in fiscal 2007 and will next install 12 units at seven bases in the central parts of Honshu and in the northern parts of Kyushu. A total of 15 PAC-3 units will be deployed to 10 bases across the nation over the next four years.

In fiscal 2007, one PAC-3 unit will be deployed to each of the Air Self-Defense Force's detachment bases at Kasumigaura in Ibaraki Prefecture, Narashino in Chiba Prefecture, and Takeyama in Kanagawa Prefecture. The government has already decided to deploy a PAC-3 unit to the Iruma base in Saitama Prefecture at the end of March within the current fiscal year. The government will first lay down a missile defense shield in the Kanto region to cover Tokyo and its metropolitan environs from late this March through next fiscal year.

In fiscal 2008, the government will deploy four PAC-3 units to the Hamamatsu base in Shizuoka Prefecture to provide against attacks

targeting atomic power plants in the Tokai districts. In fiscal 2009, the government will deploy four PAC-3 units to the Gifu base in Gifu Prefecture and two detachment bases in Aibano, Shiga Prefecture, and Hakusan, Mie Prefecture to cover the area of Nagoya City and defend atomic power plants on the Sea of Japan side. In fiscal 2010, the government will deploy four PAC-3 units to the Ashiya base, the Tsuiki base, and the Koradai detachment base (all located in Fukuoka Prefecture) in the northern parts of Kyushu, which is nearest to North Korea, in order to shield big cities in Kyushu.

SCHIEFFER